

OLC #13-1478

11 April 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Luncheon Meeting and Phone Conversations with
Bob Rogers, NBC, Concerning Possible Show on
the KGB

1. Over the past week I have had several phone conversations and one luncheon meeting (6 April) with Bob Rogers, a television producer with NBC. A summary of what was discussed in these conversations follows:

a. Mr. Rogers said that after producing, "Spying for Uncle Sam," he talked to the officials at NBC News about doing a story on "the other guys--the KGB." Rogers said that while NBC liked the idea and approved in principle, it was agreed that the success of such a show would depend almost entirely on the degree of cooperation they receive from CIA. Rogers also confided that since NBC planned to produce the Olympics from Moscow, that the decision to do an expose on the KGB would be a "gutsy" decision by NBC management.

b. If they produce the show, it would be scheduled for an open air date in early August, i.e., there isn't much time and he would have to get going very soon.

c. Rogers agreed that the basis for the story would be John Barron's book, "KGB," but that he would need stories to update the information in the book to give the show some immediacy--what's happening now. To produce new film and interviews, he would need our assistance.

He specifically said he was most interested in making it as personalized a story as possible, i.e., personal stories presumably with defectors or with Americans who have been intimidated, threatened or recruited by the KGB. He said what he really wanted

to portray if at all possible was how widespread and insidious KGB activities were here in the United States and elsewhere throughout the world. He would obviously like to film any display of hardware, devices, photographs, etc., we might be able to make available. He would also welcome any information on the KGB's sister services. He would be delighted to receive any details we would be willing to provide (he said, for instance, that there were indications that Agee had really been turned around by a woman but that this had never been fully reported).

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2. Mr. Rogers has indicated that he would accept our assistance on any terms we might wish to impose. He seems sincere in his objective to present an honest if somewhat startling portrayal of the threat posed by the KGB. I have known Rogers for several years and know him to be well connected in the Intelligence Community from his many activities overseas. I also know him to be honest and objective. While he has not, perhaps, always presented information to our total liking, he is an honorable man to the best of my knowledge and a good reporter. I would hope that we could cooperate with him if at all possible.

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Herbert E. Hetu

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SPACE-AGE SPIES

By Arnaud de Borchgrave

Time and again, a Soviet Embassy car stopped for a few moments across the street from the Tehran home of Maj. Gen. Ahmed Mogharebi, 51, a logistics expert in the Iranian Army—and a Russian spy of long standing. On each occasion, Soviet Consul Boris Kabanov would push a button under the seat of his car, and a remote-controlled, high-speed transmitter hidden in the general's home would broadcast twenty minutes' worth of taped intelligence data to Kabanov in the space of just twenty seconds. The system worked for four years, but Kabanov tried it once too often. As he pushed the button one day last year, agents of SAVAK, Iran's secret police, closed in and arrested the Soviet consul and the Iranian general. The arrests broke one of the Soviet KGB's top Iranian connections—and gave Western intelligence a glimpse of the high-technology world of Russian spies.

Mogharebi signed a long confession. "He told us about 90 per cent of what he knew with the hope of a stay of execution," an Iranian official informed me. The general was executed last January nonetheless, and his Soviet contact, Kabanov, was expelled from the country. Mogharebi was a big catch—one of two by Iranian agents in the last few months—and when I visited Tehran recently, Iranian counterespionage agents were showing off to their Western counterparts the ingenious intelligence hardware they had confiscated, all of it made in Moscow.

Blinking Signals: To photograph documents, the Russians issued Mogharebi a small, cylindrical camera that doubled as a cigarette lighter. He simply rubbed it across a page to record the text. If anyone walked in on him, all Mogharebi had to do was put the "lighter" down—or use it to light a cigarette. To receive his instructions, Mogharebi hid a tiny receiver in his house that was activated by a radio signal from the Soviet Embassy. Multicolored lights blinked out the incoming message. (Two orange lights followed by a green and two blues, for example, meant that one of his transmissions had been received.) Using these devices and the transmitter activated by Kabanov, the Russian general passed the Russians

valuable logistical information on such matters as U.S. military equipment in Iran and the availability of spare parts and ammunition.

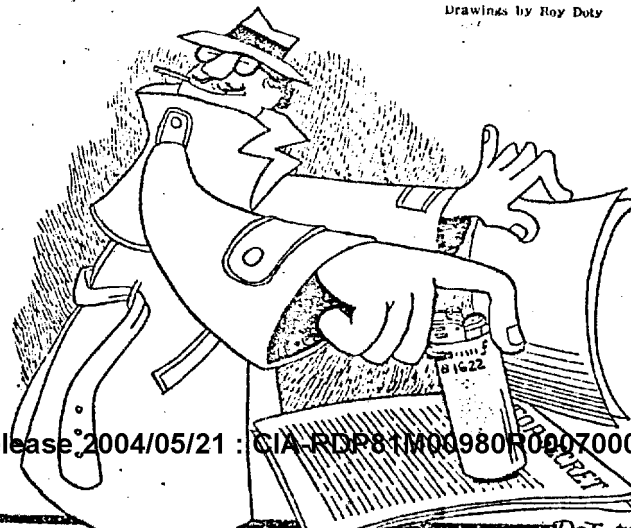
The Russians used even more elaborate equipment to keep in touch with another agent who was arrested in Iran not long ago. Ali-Naghi Rabbani, 54, a high-ranking functionary at the Ministry of Education, got his instructions directly from the Soviet Union via satellite—on a receiver that looked like an electronic pocket calculator. The device displayed his messages as groups of digits, which could be read as letters when the calculator was turned upside down (the number 7, for example, would appear to be an "L"). The letters, in turn, were part of an encoded message.

Gossip: Rabbani did his spying in afterhours Tehran, to which he gained entry with the help of his well-connected wife. Rabbani became friends with the air force chief and other VIP's and passed the Russians what he learned from party gossip until SAVAK caught up with him. Now he is in prison, awaiting execution.

American agents have gadgets similar to the ones used by Rabbani and Mogharebi, a knowledgeable U.S. intelligence source told NEWSWEEK's David C. Martin in Washington. But because the KGB has more money to spend on equipment, the official added, Russian spies use such devices "much more widely than we have and in many more areas." The KGB is

The mini-camera: It lights cigarettes, too

Drawings by Roy Doty



ahead in using satellites to communicate with agents, again because of money. "The satellite we have up there is pretty well worn out," said Martin's source. But when the CIA requested funds for a new one last year, the Administration and Congress turned the agency down.

The Tudeh: Despite the arrests of Mogharebi and Rabbani, Tehran's counterintelligence agents must still keep track of thousands of Russians and East Europeans in Iran, including hundreds of workers building a new steel mill. But the potential spies are not all foreigners. As a young man, Mogharebi joined the Tudeh, Iran's clandestine Communist Party, and



A satellite calculator: Orders from Moscow

was recruited as a KGB spy; Rabbani reluctantly turned spy when Russian agents threatened to publicize the fact that he, too, had briefly belonged to the Tudeh. Other Iranians with similar backgrounds may be vulnerable to blackmail by the KGB.

Information given to the KGB by such agents is sometimes fed to Iran's nearest enemy, neighboring Iraq. Some years ago, when tensions between the two countries were at a particularly high point, Iran planned a series of troop movements near the Iraqi border. Each time the Iranians started to move, the Iraqis seemed to know about it in advance and quickly deployed a blocking force. After his arrest, Mogharebi admitted that his own information had traveled, via cigarette lighter and high-speed transmitter, from Tehran to Moscow and back to the Iraqis.

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